



How cloud is **DRIVING** the **QUEST** for **BETTER CX**



The government's ability to improve the customer experience is being fueled by the scalability and flexibility that cloud technology offers

THE EMPHASIS ON providing a government customer experience (CX) that matches or exceeds that of the private sector is not new. It dates to at least 1993, when President Bill Clinton issued an executive order that set customer service standards and measurements. But new advances in technology developments, particularly cloud, are giving agencies an unprecedented ability to understand and enhance all aspects of customer engagement.

Improving the customer experience is one of 14 cross-agency priority goals in the 2018 President's Management Agenda. The document notes that individuals and businesses expect government services to be as efficient and intuitive as the services they receive from commercial organizations. And it puts a particular emphasis on providing a better digital experience.

To help achieve those goals, the Office of Management and Budget updated Circular

A-11 last year to give agencies more specific CX guidance. Agencies are required to perform an annual self-assessment of how well their citizen-facing services meet the CX program maturity model's core functions: measurement, governance and strategy, culture and organization, customer understanding, and service design. Based on those results, agencies must develop an action plan for addressing any gaps in performance.

In addition, the General Services Administration's Digital.gov offers a Customer Experience Toolkit that has tips on assessing an agency's current CX environment and planning for improvements. Digital.gov's Customer Experience Community of Practice boasts more than 700 CX practitioners across more than 140 federal, state and local government offices.

On the National Association of State CIOs' list of Top 10 Policy and

Technology Priorities for 2020, CX figures prominently in the goals related to digital government, cloud services, customer relationship management, data management and analytics, and innovation and transformation through technology.

Why CX starts with the employee experience

The push for better CX has accelerated in recent years due in part to technological advances in cloud technology. Emerging solutions such as artificial intelligence and software as a service thrive on cloud's flexibility and scalability. In addition to saving money, the latest cloud-based tools have profound implications for the employee experience.

In fact, improving CX begins with improving the employee experience because engaged employees are the only way to deliver topnotch customer services.

In recognition of that fact, two of the four strategies for achieving the Trump administration's cross-agency priority goal on CX focus on employees: 1) rewarding programs and people who demonstrate outstanding service and 2) creating a support and accountability network to ensure sustainable CX improvement across government.

With the help of cloud-based technologies, agencies can task machines with performing repetitive, mundane tasks, freeing employees to focus on more meaningful, complex work, such as analysis or customer support. According to a recent Deloitte study, federal and state workers spend at least 20% of their time on tasks they consider unimportant or not core to their mission. Those tasks are ripe for automation, which has the potential to increase job satisfaction and productivity.

In 2018, the Defense Logistics Agency's Information Operations applied robotic process automation to employee onboarding, and as a result, most new employees have access to email and other tools on their first day of work, which enhances productivity and gives employees an immediate sense of connection to the agency.

The Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group, which produce the Best Places to Work rankings to assess how federal employees view their jobs and workplaces, notes that "having a highly motivated and engaged workforce is critical to a well-functioning government and the success of our country."

The federal employee engagement score on the 2019 Best Places to Work was 61.7 out of 100, compared to 77 for private-sector employees. On the plus side, 67% of federal respondents said they are given a real opportunity to improve their skills, 61% said they feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things, and 89% said the work they do is important. Areas for improvement include training and developing leaders and ensuring that employees have a positive work environment and the resources they need to do their jobs.

Improvement and innovation in the cloud

Agencies have begun to recognize cloud's role in improving the experience for customers and employees. For example, the Air Force adopted a cloud-based,

mobile-first plan that will give the service's 700,000 airmen and airwomen access to human resources services and analytics on themselves to see how they are performing.

Last year, USA.gov started using a chatbot named Sam to help customers who've been affected by scams — one of the most popular topics for the USA.gov website and contact centers. Sam relies on a flowchart to direct users to the appropriate answer, and its developers wrote friendly, empathetic responses. In its first month, Sam interacted with 4,000 users, 78% of whom successfully asked a question and received a satisfactory answer. The success has spurred the development team to use AI to address more topics and add more features.

At the state level, the InnovateOhio Platform tackles improving both the customer and the employee experiences. The platform offers agencies a free user experience digital toolkit and a website template accelerator that is cloud-hosted and scalable. In addition, the state's intranet for employees "features intuitive navigation, simplified access to onboarded business applications and a modernized, mobile-responsive design."

However, as always, there is room for improvement. The 15 federal agencies and programs that Forrester rated for its 2019 CX Index earned an average score of 59.7 out of 100 — a number that was unchanged from the previous three years and "falls smack in the middle of the 'poor' category," wrote Rick Parrish, a principal analyst and vice president at Forrester, in a blog post.

Agencies are making efforts to improve. About 37% of respondents to a recent survey of FCW readers said their agencies are fully committed (5 on a scale of 1 to 5) to delivering a better digital experience for partners and customers, while only 6% said they had no commitment to doing so. In addition, 67% of respondents said their agencies use cloud-based tools to gain more insight into customers and improve outcomes.

"Federal agencies that want to improve their CX quickly and efficiently must... prioritize parts of the experience that will contribute the most to mission success," Parrish wrote. They can do that by ensuring that services are easy to use, providing help when customers need it and making customers — and employees — feel respected and engaged. And they will find a powerful ally in cloud technology. ■

CX and CLOUD by the Numbers



94%

FCW respondents who said their agencies have some level of commitment to delivering a better digital experience for customers and partners



67%

FCW respondents whose agencies use cloud-based tools to gain more insight into customers and improve outcomes



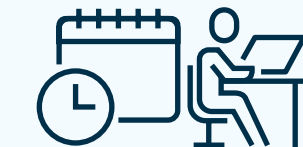
28%

FCW respondents who said improving the employee experience is a top priority at their agencies



61.7 out of 100

Overall federal employee engagement score in the 2019 Best Places to Work rankings



10%

Federal and state government work hours spent on documenting and recording information